

both brandnew and recently produced humvees, including anti-lock brake and electronic stability control safe kits to help prevent rollovers and accidents.

In fact, since 2017, all new Army humvees already have these safety kits installed. This includes humvees procured as part of our partnership at Rock Island Arsenal, where the safety kits are actually part of the integrated chassis system delivered to the arsenal.

As the Army continues its joint light tactical vehicle procurement strategy, the humvee will continue to be the workhorse of the future—the Army tactical wheeled vehicle fleet is led by these units with over 50,000 in service—for decades to come. As such, we owe it to the fighting forces to give them newer, safer humvees. And we must ensure that recently produced humvees currently in the fleet, those used across combat and training and other operational capabilities, are updated with safety kits.

The Army is also reviewing additional safety upgrades—such as airbags and restraint systems—that can help save lives as well.

All of these critical investments must be made in parallel. The “60 Minutes” piece has made clear the risks and costs. This is a clear call to action for all of us in Congress. The FY22 omnibus included \$183 million for more safety kits on existing humvees. I look forward to continuing to work with the Army on further efforts to make the humvee safer and to keep our promise to protect the lives of our men and women in uniform.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING ORRIN G. HATCH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on Saturday, we lost a remarkable former colleague: Senator Orrin Hatch.

Orrin rose from poverty to become one of the longest serving Senators in U.S. history and the longest serving Republican Senator ever. During his more than 40-year Senate career, he built a record of accomplishment that included landmark legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act; and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which he authored with his close friend from across the aisle, Senator Ted Kennedy. At the time of Orrin's retirement, no Senator alive had had as many pieces of legislation signed into law.

I was privileged to serve under Orrin's leadership at the Senate Finance Committee, one of three influential Senate committees that he chaired during his tenure in the Senate. In addition to being an outstanding legis-

lator and a principled conservative, Orrin Hatch was also a cherished and good-humored colleague and a deeply kind human being. It is no surprise that his friendships spanned both sides of the aisle or that both the Democrat and Republican leaders paid tribute to him yesterday.

Mr. President, I know I speak for more than myself when I say that I have missed his presence in the Senate. His death is a loss for our country and especially for his beloved State of Utah, which he served so faithfully and so well during his long career.

My thoughts and prayers this week are with Orrin's wife of more than 64 years, Elaine, with Orrin's six children, and with his dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, the first year of Democratic governance in Washington has produced surging inflation, a disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, and a massive border crisis. And, unfortunately, so far 2022 isn't looking much better. Our inflation crisis keeps getting worse, energy prices are soaring, and the Biden border crisis is reaching new heights.

When President Biden took office, inflation was 1.4 percent, well within the Federal Reserve's target inflation rate of 2 percent; and it might have remained there had Democrats not decided to pass a \$1.9 trillion partisan spending spree under the guise of COVID relief—mere weeks, I might add, after Congress had approved a fifth bipartisan COVID relief bill that met essentially all current pressing COVID needs.

The Democrats' decision to flood the economy with unnecessary government money set off an inflation crisis that shows little sign of stopping. March saw inflation hit 8.5 percent, a 40-year high. Everywhere Americans look, they are paying more: more for groceries, more for gas, more for utilities, more for furniture, more for used cars and trucks—and the list goes on.

While wages increased in 2021, inflation outstripped wage growth, which means that instead of a pay increase, many Americans saw a de facto pay cut. Needless to say, inflation is having the biggest impact on those who can least afford it.

The President likes to tout job creation and economic growth—although most of what he takes credit for is the natural consequence of economic recovery after the pandemic—but his claims mean little to families who are wondering how they will be able to pay their soaring grocery bills or whether they can afford the gas that they need for the rest of the month.

And speaking of affording gas, thanks to Democrats, we are also rapidly approaching a full-blown energy crisis. Gas prices increased on average to an all-time high in March, according to AAA, and that is on top of the soaring inflationary costs of electricity and home gas services, among other energy

commodities. As of yesterday, gas was \$4.12 a gallon, up from \$2.39 a gallon when President Biden took office. The administration, of course, has attempted to blame this hike on Putin, but the vast majority of the 72-percent increase in gas prices since President Biden took office predates the war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia.

Every gallon of gas purchased at current prices hits family budgets hard, especially in rural States like South Dakota where driving long distances is the norm. Diesel averaged \$2.68 a gallon in January of 2021. As of yesterday, it was \$5.07. That not only hits our transportation sector and truckers but farmers across the country as they plant their fields this spring.

There is no easy solution on inflation, but the first imperative is to do no more harm. Once Democrats saw the inflationary effects of their \$1.9 trillion spending bill, they should have instantly resolved to refrain from any more unnecessary government spending. Big spending, however, is a way of life for Democrats. So instead of committing to spending restraint, they spent last fall pushing for a second massive spending spree that would have made our inflation situation that much worse. And while that reckless tax-and-spending spree was mercifully halted in the Senate last December, the President's recent budget request made clear that Democrats are still intent on implementing many of their tax-and-spending spree's measures.

That is right. Democrats unleashed the worst inflation in 40 years by flooding the economy with unnecessary government money, and they still want to double down on that strategy. If Democrats have their way on government spending, our inflation crisis could last for years to come.

Mr. President, while there are few things the President and Democrats can do to speed up the end of their self-inflicted inflation crisis other than not making it worse, there are actions that Democrats can take to address the high energy costs that Americans are facing, and chief among those things is unleashing American energy production of both alternative and conventional energy. Unfortunately, the President seems pretty committed to doing the opposite when it comes to conventional energy. He has asked other countries to increase their conventional energy production, but he has made it clear that he is not interested in seeing the United States do the same.

While his administration is finally conducting sales for new onshore oil and gas leases, it has reduced the land available for such leases and substantially increased the royalty rate, sending a clear signal to American energy producers that the administration is reluctant to collaborate with it. Meanwhile, the Securities and Exchange Commission has proposed requiring costly new financial disclosures that would discourage investment in conventional energy production.